

"Letter From Loretto"

Hello again from the Federal Correctional Institution at Loretto, PA. First, I wanted to thank everybody for the interest in my ~~last~~^{first} letter. We had more than 1 million hits! Second, thank you for the more than 200 letters I've received since ~~the~~^{this} letter was published. I'm answering each of them, but sending them out is a slow process because I have to use mailing labels, and we're only allowed to print five per day. Third, thank you very much for your very generous contributions to my family through www.defendjohnk.com and through the Government Accountability Project. I've told several of you that I could only make it through this nightmare because of friends and supporters like you, and I mean it.

I've been following the Edward Snowden case with great interest, and I've written about what I consider to be his heroic actions in another letter. In the meantime, I've just finished two great books that I wanted to bring to your attention. ~~Another~~ "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State," by John W. Whitehead has been a shocking read for me. Whitehead shows - all in one place - the civil liberties we've lost in only a decade. "Three Felonies A Day," by Harvey Silverglate shows how if the government really wants to get you, they will - with felony charges.

Health care is a major topic of debate in the national press, especially now that the Affordable Health Care Act (Obamacare) is law. Health care is also a major topic of conversation and

debate here at Loretto, although we prisoners don't have much authority to change the status quo.

Loretto is considered to be a Level 2 medical facility; that is, it is supposed to be equipped with a medical unit that can handle prisoners with chronic problems like diabetes, emphysema, and other issues. In fact, the medical unit is well-equipped and has its own x-ray facilities, a dental clinic, and a lab. There is an osteopath in charge and several physician's assistants (PA) from the U.S. Public Health Service on staff.

But that's not to say that all is well in Loretto's medical unit. Just before I arrived here, prisoner Cameron Douglas, the son of actor Michael Douglas, had a mishap while playing handball. He injured his leg and went to the medical unit, where he was told he had a sprained knee and was given ibuprofen. After suffering with intense pain for two weeks, complaining all the while, he finally could not get out of bed, and the warden ordered that he be taken to a local hospital. An x-ray showed that Douglas had a broken femur, a condition that, if left untreated, could lead to death. The hospital also found a large blood clot in the leg, as well as a broken finger. Douglas underwent surgery to repair the broken bones and to relieve the dangerous clot. The Douglas family has filed a lawsuit against the Bureau of Prisons which is still pending.

I've had my own personal experience with the medical unit.

Two weeks after my arrival, I dislocated my left pinkie finger while exercising. I popped it back into place, but having broken bones in the past, I knew the finger was also broken, so I walked over to Medical. "Sick call" appointments are only accepted between 6:00am and 6:30am, but I went directly to the evening pill line attendant and told him that I had an emergency. He wrapped the finger and told me to see the PA in the morning. I returned to Medical in the morning with my entire left hand swollen, my finger double in size, and told my PA that I was certain it was broken. No, the PA said, it's just jammed. He put it in a splint, despite my request for an x-ray. He told me to come back in a week and he gave me some ibuprofen.

Even with the ibuprofen, the swelling and pain did not improve. Again I asked for an x-ray. Finally, 10 days after the injury, the PA agreed to it. The x-ray found that a tendon had snapped off at the center knuckle, pulling a chunk of bone off with it. Broken. Just like I had said. The PA rewrapped it in another splint and said he would make arrangements to send me to an orthopedic specialist nearby. In the meantime, he said, keep it wrapped.

Eight days later, and 18 days after the injury, I heard that dreaded announcement: "Kiriakou - report to the lieutenant's office." I walked to the office and was told that I was going for an outside medical consultation. First I was escorted to the medical unit, where I was strip-searched and given brown pants, a brown tee-shirt, a pair of underwear, a pair of socks, and a

pair of slippers. The corrections officer (CO) took my clothes and my watch and put them in a plastic bag that he locked in the unit. I was then handcuffed and shackled around my ankles. A chain was placed around my waist, which connected to my handcuffs and my leg irons. Then a black steel box about the size of a computer hard drive was locked over the handcuffs so the lock could not be picked. (Remember, I'm a dangerous criminal.) If I had been in a camp, where I was supposed to be, an inmate driver would have simply dropped me off at the doctor's office and then picked me up afterward. But a nameless, faceless bureaucrat in the Bureau of Prisons decided that I am a "threat to the public safety."

Now completely shackled, the CO handed me a form and told me to sign it. It was a list of "rules" for the trip to the doctor, including that I promise not to escape and that if I do try to escape, I understand that I'll be shot. One rule in particular caught my eye. It said that for the duration of the trip I was to call everybody "sir." I said I wouldn't sign. I wouldn't try to escape, but respect is earned. I am old enough to be the CO's father, yet he calls me "Kiriakou." I said I would call him CO, but not "sir." Well, he said, he simply wouldn't take me to the doctor. Fine, I said. We stared at each other for a moment, then the CO said, "OK. Forget it." So I took shackled baby steps to a waiting van with two COs in it, and they drove me to a nearby doctor's office.

At the office, the doctor looked at my x-rays and examined my finger. "It's broken," he said. "It's already started to heal